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SUBJECT: PODCASTING HITS THE CONGO

¶1. Summary: Embassy Kinshasa introduced a dozen radio journalists to the concept of podcasting, focusing on IIP's French website (<http://www.America.gov/fr>). Media representatives made a number of useful suggestions about how this multimedia tool can be used in the Congo and were clearly interested in using IIP podcasts as part of programming on local radio stations. The event showed that podcasting can be a valuable medium in the DRC for projecting American values and to raise issues of interest. End Summary.

¶2. Public Affairs Officer Katya Thomas and Deputy Chief of Mission Sam Brock gave a presentation August 25, 2008 at the Mission's media center to introduce the concept of podcasting to representatives of local broadcast media, particularly radio. Using a powerpoint presentation in French developed at post specifically for this event, they covered the development of the term and how the concept of podcasting differs from other types of broadcasts. Assistant PAO Robert Keith demonstrated several different types of iPods. He also played a recent IIP/AF product ("Elections 2008: les jeunes electeurs et la politique") as an example of what the USG produces and makes available to the Congolese media. Note: Because of underdeveloped Internet infrastructure in Congo, Public Affairs plans to download new podcasts onto CD's and send them to local radio stations at regular intervals, as well as to monitor usage of this material. End note.

¶3. Questions demonstrated the journalists' positive response to the event. Brock explained that IIP podcasts are part of our public diplomacy effort to promote U.S. culture and values. Participants suggested holding longer programs discussing issues using a podcast as a point of departure. They also suggested holding focus groups to get active participant feedback. They noted that they would like to send ideas back to Washington for future podcasts, and would also welcome training on how to make their own podcasts to use on their own websites. They also suggested that it would be useful for them to have a podcast about podcasting and other new media outreach Tools, such as webchats and blogs that are not well known yet in Congo.

¶4. Comment: This PD event confirmed our view that podcasting is a new concept here, albeit one that will undoubtedly grow quickly as journalists in attendance showed great interest in the new possibilities this tool offers. They were engaged and eager to know more about the subject matter. We believe their interest represents an opportunity to respond to the media's curiosity about U.S. issues through podcasting and to build on it. Their understanding of the usefulness of IIP podcasts and their willingness to use them as free content for radio broadcasts will increase our ability to promote democratic practices and mutual understanding between the U.S. and the Congo. Embassy Kinshasa is happy to make available its powerpoint presentation on podcasts in French to other interested posts. End comment.

